

I thank the gentlewoman very much for yielding time.

Ms. FOXX. I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) for coming in and adding to the comments that have been made by my colleagues on this issue of national security and bringing up some points that had not been made before. You have done a very, very fine job of bringing in those issues about the 9/11 Commission report and showing how we are doing the things that the 9/11 Commission has said that we need to do. It is something that I had intended to mention in my remarks, but I am glad that you brought them up because you were very eloquent in what you said.

I want to say again that the Republican leadership here, the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, we are all focused on improving national security for this country. We want to make sure that the people of this Nation know that they are secure in their everyday lives, that they can go about their jobs, go about their leisure, and go about their business every day doing what they should be doing and forgetting in many ways what happened in 9/11 because they have a government, a national government that is focused on the defense of this Nation and national security.

And I want to encourage our Democratic colleagues to hear what I know their constituents must be saying to them, that they want to remain safe in this country and they want us to deal with those issues at this level. We know no other level of government can do that. And I feel confident that over the next week, as we continue to deal with the issues that we need to deal with before we take a recess to go home and work on our campaigns, that we will focus on the most important job of the Federal Government, and that is securing this country and focusing on the defense of this country and making sure that our citizens can go about their daily lives feeling safe as we did before 9/11 hit and as we will again.

And I want to say to our leadership, you have done a wonderful job in taking us closer and closer to a time when we will be able to once again feel free to do all those things that we did before 9/11, and make sure that that kind of act never occurs in this country, and yet we maintain our constitutional rights and privileges and at the same time go after terrorists where we should be going after them.

IN MEMORY OF FORT WORTH FIRE CHIEF CHARLES GAINES

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes to address the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to honor the life and the memory of Fort Worth Fire Chief Charles Gaines. Chief Gaines passed away this past Saturday evening rather suddenly of natural causes. Chief Gaines was 49 years of age.

Mr. Speaker, our paths crossed several times during Chief Gaines' 4-year tenure as fire chief and my 4 years in Congress. The commitment and dedication that the chief showed to his profession was evident from the moment we met. Under his leadership, Chief Gaines was accountable for the oversight of 745 firefighters that composed the Fort Worth Fire Department. As fire chief, he also oversaw the department's response to over 57,000 incidents annually in the city of Fort Worth.

Before serving as the fire chief of Fort Worth, Chief Gaines served in the United States Air Force as a fire protection specialist. He worked on crash and rescue teams at various Air Force bases until his promotion to Air Force assistant chief. After receiving an honorable discharge from the Air Force in 1980, he continued his career as a member of the Oklahoma City Fire Department in 1981.

During the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, he served as the fire department's operations safety officer. His service and leadership during this national tragedy ensured that the first responders and government workers were informed and received all medical attention.

Fire Chief Gaines was known throughout the department as a man of integrity. While negotiating with the firefighters' union early in his Fort Worth career, his calm, collective demeanor earned him the respect of the department and his co-workers. He was able to compromise with the union and resolve differences between the two sides.

He had a detail-oriented approach to problems, and this meant that problems within his department, those issues were addressed the first time around. Chief Gaines earned his Master's Degree in Business Administration from Oklahoma City University, and he incorporated efficient management techniques throughout the Fort Worth Fire Department. This management style allowed him to incorporate and encourage innovation and alternative thinking.

Chief Gaines was able to initiate solutions that would more effectively safeguard the citizens of Fort Worth, while saving tax dollars in the process. Chief Gaines was the first African American fire chief in the city of Fort Worth. The city has a 113-year history of that department. Chief Gaines brought a new wave of energy to the Fort Worth Fire Department. His policy of requiring a minimum of four firefighters to each fire truck helped Fort Worth become one of the top 10 safest cities in America.

His leadership, professionalism and dedication will not be soon forgotten in

the city of Fort Worth or Oklahoma City. His devotion to his career and his fellow officers was absolute, and his service to the Fort Worth community will be deeply missed.

Godspeed, Chief Gaines. We will see you at the top.

□ 2245

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again. I want to thank the Democratic leader, NANCY PELOSI, and also the Democratic leadership, STENY HOYER, Mr. JAMES CLYBURN and Mr. JOHN LARSON, who is our Vice Chair.

I must say, there is so much to talk about tonight. Not only Members of Congress know there is serious business to discuss as it relates to the new revelations on what is happening in Iraq and the war in Iraq, but also I think it is a reflection on the lack of oversight here in this House.

I think the American people need to be very concerned about what has not happened here on this floor, in committee, in subcommittees, and as it relates to the leadership making sure that our men and women in harm's way not only have what they need in the field, need it in Afghanistan, where they are undermanned and under gun at this particular time, but due to the training of Coalition Forces many are able to protect themselves, but they need more.

In the war in Iraq, a number of unfortunate events are taking place on a daily basis. A number of Marines were lost over the weekend, and we are in our last week of session. I think that the lack of oversight and diplomacy at the same time has resulted in a new insurgence that has been created in Iraq.

I must say that Karen D. Young of the Washington Post on Sunday wrote about this. I think it is important to read it. It was on the front page. I think it is important that Members pay close attention to that and provide the kind of oversight that is needed.

I am glad to be joined by the 30-Something Working Group, Mr. Bill Delahunt, better known as Uncle Bill, Mr. Tim Ryan, who is still injured but on the floor because this is our last time before the election to be able to let the Members and the American people know what has not happened in this House. We are also joined by Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, who is my good friend and served in the district next to me in Florida.

I yield to Congressman DELAHUNT.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. MEEK, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mr. RYAN.

I arrived some 10 minutes ago and had the opportunity to hear some of

the remarks of our friend and colleague from North Carolina, Ms. FOXX. She spoke about the truly outrageous comments by both the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, and the President of Iran, Mr. Ahmadinejad, at the United Nations; and I think we all concur that not only were the words offensive and insulting and demeaning, but they had to be responded to.

She spoke clearly about the threat that Iran is posing in the Middle East. Yet she talks about Iraq with a view that I don't share in terms of her description. She speaks about progress, moving forward. That is a very hopeful vision, and maybe under new leadership that is a possibility. But that is not what is happening now. And, ironically, the direction that Iraq is going is towards Iran. How ironic. How ironic that a member of the majority party speaks about Iraq as if it were going forward and at the same time decries the threat from Iran.

If you look to my right in this particular picture, what you have is a photo that was recently taken in Tehran. The gentleman that is farthest to my right is the Prime Minister of Iraq. He is shaking hands and clasping the hands of Mr. Ahmadinejad, who is the President of Iran and whose remarks at the United Nations provoked a response from most Americans and hopefully most members of the United Nations that was deserved.

What I find particularly interesting is that we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars and almost 3,000 American lives have been lost to provide freedom to Iraq, and yet they are going to Tehran. And while in Tehran, according to the Congressional Research Service, there have been a number of agreements between these two governments. Stop and think about that.

A joint committee has been formed to prevent border infiltration from Iran into Iraq, a joint committee to exchange information on mine fields left over from the 1980 to 1988 war, cooperation to search for missing victims of the war, a requirement for Iran to devote a part of its reconstruction contributions for Iraq to Iraq's defense minister. And, most importantly, a bilateral military cooperation.

What have we done?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

You ask a very important question: What have we done?

I think that answer came to us in the form of a third-party validator in the form of the New York Times on Sunday with the headline, "Spy Agency Says Iraq War Worsens Terrorism Threat." The national intelligence estimate, which is a conglomerate report of all of the spy agencies that operate inside the U.S. Government, and they attribute literally a more direct role to the Iraq war in fueling radicalism than that presented in either White House documents or in a report released last Wednesday by our House Intelligence

Committee. Essentially, it asserts that Islamic radicalism, rather than being in retreat, has metastasized, the words in the report, and spread across the globe.

We are literally in a situation now where we have our good friends on the other side of the aisle trying desperately to articulate that they are stronger on national security when every day brings more and more bad news for them in terms of where we are versus where we were 5 years ago.

If you recall, a couple of weeks ago we talked about on this floor everywhere we all went on September 11. Our constituents asked us, so are we safer? Are we safer this September 11 and beyond than we were on September 11 5 years ago?

I have not seen a more damning assessment with a resounding "no" as an answer than this one.

Add to that your question of what have we done. There are so many reports we could spend the entire hour just on the whole issue of the lack of troops that we have in Iraq and Afghanistan, the assessments that our military experts are doing and desperate messages that they appear to be sending to the administration that are going unheeded.

One colonel said his unit equipment levels have fallen so low that they now had no tanks or other armored vehicles to use in training and that his soldiers were rated as largely untrained in attack and defense. That is one of our colonels fighting in Iraq. That is just absolutely inexcusable.

It would be different under the Democrats. We would implement our real security plan. We would make sure that the equipment that our troops need would be funded and provided. We would make sure that we have a plan to get us through the war, make sure that we stand up to Iraqi troops and have a phased withdrawal of American troops, and that there would be an end in sight.

Mr. RYAN, you said it so well the other day when you gave a very stark assessment of what is going on with the war in Iraq. I know you have some charts here that I am sure you will take us through. We have got to make sure that we focus both on security and getting a handle on the situation over there and getting a handle on the homeland security situation here that is also writhing in disarray inside our own borders.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think it is important. Again, this is a third-party validation from the national intelligence estimate. This is not us talking.

Time and time again we find out there are these other people that are giving us information. This is not information coming out of the Democratic Caucus, and I want to read some assessments that are almost unbelievable, things that we have been saying, but finally now the best and the brightest of the national security teams

across the countries, the spy agencies, professionals in the business are saying this.

They are saying that although the intelligence officials agree that the United States has damaged al Qaeda, which we have, probably through Afghanistan more so than Iraq, the original front that we all agreed on, that we disrupted their abilities to plan and direct major operations, radical Islamic networks have spread and decentralized.

We poured gasoline on a fire when we went into Iraq, and we need to make that point. Many of the new cells, the NIE conclude, have no connection to any central structure and arose independently. The members of the cells communicate only among themselves and derive their inspiration, ideology and tactics from the more than 5,000 radical Islamic Web sites. They spread the message that the war in Iraq is a western attempt to conquer Islam by first occupying Iraq and establishing a permanent presence in the Middle East.

What we have to realize here and I think what the President needs to realize and the lack of oversight by the Republican Congress, what we need to realize here is that it is not our view that matters, it is what do they think? How do they see our response? If average people in the Middle East see us as being detrimental to their interest, their ideology spreads. So this attempt in Iraq has really poured gasoline on the fire. I think at the end of the day, it has made us less safe.

□ 2300

And it is not our saying it.

I think we need to make this point very clearly. Is Saddam Hussein being gone a good thing? Yes. But overall, take a step back and look at the big picture. If you are creating thousands and thousands of more terrorists who are decentralized and spread across the world who are looking to hit the United States and make the bull's eye much bigger, I think it is important to say this administration clearly has made the United States less safe. And as citizens of this country, we can't be afraid to say that. They have made us less safe, period, dot, Mr. MEEK. Less safe. Not me, not KENDRICK MEEK, not DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, not BILL DELAHUNT, not NANCY PELOSI, not HARRY REID, not CHUCK SCHUMER, but independent professionals have made this assessment and said that the war in Iraq has made the country less safe.

And even those people who said maybe it was a good idea to go in, it was the administration and the execution afterwards that has made us less safe because we went in there with no plan. We went in there without enough troops. We went in there and didn't do the job. We went in there without the proper approach to figure this whole thing out.

And at the end of the day, it is not our saying it, and I take no pride in

saying that we are less safe now because our constitutional obligation, when we swear and put our hand up, is to make sure that we protect this country. I take no pride in this, but what we have to do is take this information and fix it. And the Republican majority has made no attempts to try to fix this.

Everything has been politics, Mr. DELAHUNT. Everything has been, how do we smooth this over? How do we make this look good? How do we come out and stay the course and put a banner up "Mission Accomplished"? And when that banner does not work, you put up another banner and then another banner, and you have people come to the floor. Things are not going well in Iraq. Let us admit that.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And I think you have stated it well, TIM, and that is that despite the reality, because of political needs on the part of the Republican majority, the American people are not getting the truth.

I am not suggesting that there is intentional misleading on the part of our colleagues. I think that they hope so profoundly that they have created an alternative reality. How can a Republican Member come to the floor and say on one hand we have got to be careful of Iran and things are going well in Iraq and the only thing that I can see, in addition to the report of the National Intelligence Estimate, is that Iraq is going in the direction of Iran? Some day we could wake up and there is an alliance. There is an alliance.

There are connections. The leadership in Baghdad during the Saddam Hussein regime, many of them resided in Tehran, and what we have here is a symbol of the two leaders of both of these countries executing military cooperation agreements. Is that the direction that the American administration intended when they launched a war into Iraq, that we would create a hegemon in the region, in Iran, that would be allied with Iraq? Now, I am not suggesting it is a formal alliance, but you tell me what direction it is going in. Have an oversight hearing on it.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. DELAHUNT, we talked a couple weeks ago about that handshake and how in the years that I was growing up, that Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN were growing up, in a trillion years you would never have expected this handshake to ever happen. And it certainly is not the culmination of years of hard work and diplomacy. Growing up, these two countries, Iraq and Iran, were bitter enemies locked in a war across their borders that was seemingly endless. And to have predicted that what would bring them together, and certainly Prime Minister Maliki does not hate the United States, but what would force these two countries together as allies, as that picture demonstrates, is the United States' inappropriate involvement in the midst of that region where essentially they have been

forced together because of Iran's hatred for us. And the original conflict emanated from Sunni and Shiite tension and hatred, and now the United States has done what thousands of years was not able to do, brought the Sunnis and the Shiites together, united in hatred for the United States.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. If the gentleman from Florida will yield, I think the point here is this: Was this the intention of this administration? Was this the intention? Of course it was not. So we don't want to misstate anything. The intention of the war in Iraq was not to somehow build an alliance between Iraq and Iran.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It was a byproduct.

Mr. DELAHUNT. But when you don't think through a situation, when you don't plan, you have unintended consequences.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Thank you. When you don't plan, when you don't follow through, when you don't have an exit strategy, that is what happens. So, my friend, what do we do when you have an administration and a Congress that are so reckless and so ill prepared for what the consequences are going to be that that happens? You have the Iraqi leaders and the Iranian leaders shaking hands and building alliances. We could see it coming. You can see it coming. Do you reward them with re-election? Do you say the people who got us into this position, we are going to ask them to come in and clean it up too?

It has been bad preparation. It has been misleading information up to the point that ultimately leads to this. And no one has been fired. And as Mr. MURTHA said so eloquently, not only hasn't anybody been fired, but the members and the architects of this have been promoted. Mr. Wolfowitz, who was Under Secretary of Defense, is now with the World Bank. He got a promotion. Mr. Rumsfeld is still there. All the underlings are still there.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I just want to ask Mr. MEEK, because I know he serves with great distinction on the Armed Services Committee, can you tell me has there been a hearing, an oversight hearing, in terms of what is encompassed in that bilateral military cooperation agreement between Iran and Iraq? Has there been any exercise by the Republican majority in this House of finding out what it is all about? Should we be concerned? Because, if I can for just 30 seconds, I want to read. This is from a think tank in Britain. Sometimes you have to go overseas to get the truth:

"Iran, despite being a part of U.S. President Bush's Axis of Evil, has been the chief beneficiary of the war on terror in the Middle East. Of particular note is Iran's influence in Iraq. The greatest problem facing the U.S. is that Iran has superseded the United States as the most influential power in Iraq."

Has there been a hearing in the Armed Services Committee, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I can tell you, Mr. DELAHUNT, and with Mr. RYAN being here, as we are both members of the Armed Services Committee, of course there hasn't been a hearing.

Mr. DELAHUNT, if I may, I just want to top shelf my rubber stamp again. It would be going against the philosophy of the rubber-stamp Republican majority to have such a hearing because, A, it would be embarrassing for the administration, and at the same time, embarrassing for this Congress. Things have gotten so out of control to the point to where there is not a great discussion on new members of the coalition. Have you heard that recently, that we have new countries that are coming to the coalition in the war in Iraq? No. They are not. The only new members of the coalition in the war in Iraq are U.S. contractors that are there because they are the second largest force there.

I think Mr. RYAN, when he pointed out this article that was in the Washington Post on Sunday by Karen DeYoung, I mean, there is a lot here, Mr. Speaker, even in the New York Times and even on television and even by active generals that are in the military now and those that are retired that are saying we need help, we need leadership.

When the President and this Congress punts to the military commanders on diplomacy, we have General Casey over there being the State Department and the Defense Department at the same time. We have career service State Department employees that have trained their entire lives for working out these kinds of issues. And when we put forth proposals as it relates to redeployment, taking the training wheels off the Iraqi Government and the military, there are those on the other side saying "stay the course." Okay. Let us talk about staying the course.

Mr. RYAN read something and I just want to read it again. It is out of this article. You can go on Washingtonpost.com. It is what it is. This is not something that we have put together. We have this National Intelligence Estimate that is a draft report, Mr. DELAHUNT, a draft. What is going to happen when the real report comes out after the November elections? Let me just read some of the things in the article. They are stating the obvious. I mean, are you tired? Do you need any more? That is obvious here, it is the obvious that they are stating here. More than 5,000 radical Islamic Web sites are spreading the message that the Iraq war is a Western attempt to take over Islam and establish a permanent presence in the Middle East. They are calling the United States crusaders because the President is saying "stay the course." That is all he is saying, "stay the course." By ourselves.

Now, I just want to digress here for a minute to say that being on the Armed Services Committee, you have to pay attention to what is happening in the

committee. We get our staff that writes reports even on meetings when the staff attends staff meetings, and I just remember yesterday, after the elections, the administration and our top commanders in Iraq and a number of members of the majority said, oh, yes, we will be able to take the troop levels down after the election. Yes, we will send a number of people back home. General Abizaid came out just a week ago, last week, and said that we have 147,000 troops in Iraq right now and maybe, maybe by the spring we will send 7,000 back.

Now, I am going to tell you this right now, Mr. DELAHUNT, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, and Mr. RYAN. I am no prophet and I am definitely not a psychic, but I am going to tell you this: if you keep doing the same thing expecting different results, it is not going to get us to where we need to be. This is the outfit, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, as I close, that said that we are going looking for weapons of mass destruction, that there are weapons of mass destruction out there. So under the administration when it was proven wrong, they then flipped the script and said, well, now it is the war, the war on terror, the global war on terror.

This is a war in Iraq. The war on terror is in Afghanistan. And this report, it is not a Democratic report. These are intelligence clandestine experts that are career service individuals that have said that we have more terror and it is an incubator for terrorism throughout the world.

□ 2315

So I think it is very, very important that we take note of this. And it is very, very important that we do not take this lightly.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, this is not something as it relates to the Democrats proving a point. This is not about proving a point. This is about America. This is about the United States of America. This is about the safety of United States citizens and those that live within the borders of the United States and those that are abroad of our future, and better yet this administration is saying, stay the course with very little or no oversight.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. And you are absolutely right, Mr. MEEK. And we have our interests and we have our intelligence experts saying that staying the course is the wrong approach because we are getting worse not better in terms of the results that we are getting over there.

We have our military experts, our generals, that I know Mr. DELAHUNT has the commentary from the generals that ran the operations in Iraq lined up and ready to walk us through. We try to talk about this. This is not, you know, it would be very easy for us to come out on the floor and talk about what DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ's opinion is, KENDRICK MEEK's, TIM RYAN, BILL DELAHUNT, we are citing the experts, the intelligence experts, the military experts.

Mr. DELAHUNT, I want you, if you would not mind, to go through that. I want to read the opinion of one soldier who communicated my office. This is an e-mail that I got from a soldier in Iraq fighting in Baghdad now. I want to read you his opinion because he is there.

He says, "In truth every day we are over here we become weaker and they become stronger, Taliban too. It is not getting worse in the sense of more violence and stuff like that, it is getting worse in the minds of those over here and those who are going to have to come back over here. We are not doing anything over here. The bad guys just have to kill one American every couple of days, and that is all they have to do to keep things" expletive deleted.

"We could kill hundreds a day and it would not matter. The longer we stay the worse it gets. Think about it like this, when Americans came back from fighting World War II people said, 'thank you for fighting.' When people come back from Iraq, people say, 'I am so sorry you had to do that.'"

They feel pity. Take from that what you will. Whether the Democrats or the Republicans are in the White House in a year and a half, America is in a seriously bad situation. What happened to Russia after they failed in Afghanistan, not to say that that will happen to us, but the fact of the matter is that we are a lot worse off than we were 6 years ago, a lot worse off."

Now that is pretty damning from a soldier on the ground who is obviously a patriot and who is doing everything he can to protect American interests and to protect the interests of the democracy, the fledgling democracy that has been created by hook or by crook over there.

But, let's take that one step further. And look at this chart, Mr. DELAHUNT, and then I would like to yield to you. But let's follow up on what this young soldier's opinion is from a snapshot of his on the ground, to the reality of our withdrawing from Afghanistan.

We have the rhetoric versus the reality. We have joined with the Afghan people to bring down the Taliban regime, the protectors of the al-Qaeda network, and aided a new Democratic government to rise in its place. That is the Republican rhetoric.

The reality is that the national—that is the rhetoric called the National Security Strategy of the United States, March 16, 2006. Here is the reality on the ground. From 2001 to 2003, the number of Taliban attacks amounted to 22.

From 2004 to 2006 the number of Taliban attacks amounted to 284. How about the number of suicide attacks from 2001 to 2004? Nine. The number of suicide attacks from 2005 to 2006? Sixty-four. This is in Afghanistan, we are not talking about Iraq.

Goal for numbers of NATO and U.S. trained soldiers in the Afghan army? 70,000. The number of trained soldiers in the Afghan army: About 26,900.

How about the number of hectares, which is an area, in Afghanistan de-

voted to poppy cultivation in 1999? 51,500. Hectares in Afghanistan devoted to poppy cultivation in 2005? 107,000, more than double.

Estimated opium produced from Afghanistan's crop? 4,475 metric tons, and the percent of global opiate supply originating in Afghan is 90 percent.

But let's stay the course, Mr. DELAHUNT. Let's keep going in the same direction and repeating the same mistakes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This has now gone far beyond party loyalty. I mean, this is when you take off your partisan hat, and you have to say this is for protection of not only the U.S. troops but also the people of the United States of America.

Mr. DELAHUNT. You know, and you are so right. I mean, we really have to be past partisanship at this point in time. And, again, I am not being critical of a particular Republican Member. But to come to this floor and say that things are heading in the right direction is simply inaccurate. It is not intentional, but it is inaccurate.

And it is, you know, hope that is founded on an illusion. But there are some Republicans that are speaking out, that are known to be hawkish, if you will, in terms of their view. I serve on the International Relations Committee. And recently we have had a hearing.

And before the hearing there was a letter that was sent to the President of the United States who claims that we are winning the war on terrorism, and things are going well. And this is what this letter said. I am just going to read one paragraph. "The United States efforts in Afghanistan are failing. Afghanistan faces its highest level of violence and corruption since its liberation. Drug money continues to finance terrorism." The chart shows, by the way, that there was like 44 tons of opium production in 2005.

Ms. WASSERMAN-SCHULTZ. 4,475 metric tons.

Mr. DELAHUNT. In 2006 it is estimated to be over 6,000 in this current year, 6,100 to be exact. It has become a narco state. Let me go back to this letter.

"That failure, coupled with aggressive efforts of the terrorists, threatens to destroy Afghanistan's nascent democracy. A free government that Americans and coalitions have died to support."

That letter was sent to the President by two of our colleagues, one HENRY HYDE, the highly respected chairman of the House International Relations Committee, and MARK KIRK from the State of Illinois, both Republicans. For the first time, there is a little bit of reality and forthrightness, and I am not going to use the word "truth" I will say accuracy, in terms of what the realities are.

It is confirmed over and over and over again, wherever you go, whether it is Iran, or whether it is Iraq, or whether the Global War on Terror is

being won. And when you have the administration's own intelligence services saying that they conclude that the War in Iraq has made global terrorism worse by fanning Islamic radicalism and providing a training ground for lethal methods that are increasingly being exported to countries, we are spreading terrorism all over the world like a deadly virus.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I think it is so important that we keep going back to this national intelligence estimate that was done by over a dozen professionals who have been involved in this field, Republican and Democrat, overseen by Republicans.

It says, "The estimate concludes that the radical Islamic movement has expanded," and this is very important, "it has expanded from a core of al-Qaeda operatives and affiliated groups to include a new class of self-generating cells inspired by al-Qaeda's leadership, but without any direct connection to Osama bin Laden or his top lieutenants."

So what we have done, so what we have done is we have spread this, diffused this radical ideology into self-generating cells that will be able to look, assess, and potentially attack the United States in a very decentralized way, which makes it even more difficult for us to try to combat it.

Now, this is another quote from the article. I believe this is the New York Times article. "In early 2005, the National Intelligence Council released a study concluding that Iraq had become the primary training ground for the next generation of terrorists." So it is now a training ground, it is now a practice field for new terrorists, "and that veterans of the Iraq war might ultimately overtake al-Qaeda's current leadership in the constellation of the global Jihad leadership."

We now are creating competing interests between al-Qaeda and these veterans of the Iraq war. We have turned this into a way for these terrorists to go to Iraq and basically become decorated in their way in this own demented movement that they have. And we all agree that it is demented and it does not make any sense, and they are fanatics and everything else.

But what we are trying to do is say, let's be smart about this. And their approach has caused us more grief, created more terrorists, and put us at more risk. The United States is less safe today than we were a few years ago because of the way this administration has conducted this war.

Now, if we had got rid of Saddam Hussein, and that would have been it, and we would have secured Iraq and built this democracy there, that is one thing. But that did not happen. Now we have a Secretary of Defense, it finally comes out that he said, the next person that asks me about a post-war plan will be fired.

So we have got an estimate saying that this war is actually increased the number of terrorists, and then at the

same time, and we know part of it is because it has taken so long to secure the country. Then we found out the Secretary of Defense said, well, the next person that asks for a post-war plan is going to be fired. Wrong.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. It just does not have to be this way. We have a real security plan that we will implement. After November 7, our Democratic leader, Ms. PELOSI, who will be the Speaker, who will be the Speaker of this House of Representatives, talks about in the first 100 hours, we will pass legislation that will implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations.

That we will make sure that we provide our troops with the equipment that they need, that we will provide the region with the number of troops necessary to get the job done so that we can stand the Iraqi troops up and withdraw our troops, and make sure that we begin to withdraw from the region and develop a plan to make sure that it can sustain itself.

It is just mind boggling that they support a stay the course concept. We have got to implement the plan that is going to work, instead of continuing down this path to absolute chaos.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I want to pose a question to our expert on the Armed Services Committee. Because while we are, as our national intelligence estimate suggests, while we are losing the war on terrorism, and it is expanding, what has been the impact in terms of our military?

Is our military stronger today than it was 4 years ago? Because today, Mr. MEEK, in the Washington Times, a conservative paper, there is a report by Rowan Scarborough, the Army is studying whether to add more combat units to the rotation plan for Iraq.

"Rather than planning for a big draw down of 30,000 Army soldiers and Marines this year to a level of 100,000 as field commanders had expected, the two services are now trying to figure out how to keep the equivalent of two extra divisions or 40,000 troops in Iraq."

The Army is facing more demand for troops at a time when military analysts say it is nearly stressed to the breaking point.

□ 2330

What does this mean? Are we eroding the strength of our military?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Very quickly, I just say that here is another article, September 25, 2006, by I believe it is Peter Spiegel. I mean, the bottom line is that the Army has now alerted or withheld or what have you or the Pentagon withheld, we do not know, because even as Members of Congress this has been noted as one of the most secretive administrations in the history of the United States of America. The reason why they have been very secretive in classifying everything is that the Congress has not demanded more, not only for Members of Congress such as myself who serve on two national se-

curity committees here, either be Homeland Security Committee as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Oversight or a member of several subcommittees in Armed Services.

So, when we read about these things, we have to read about it in the paper. They did not elect us to come up here and read the paper just like the average American and expect us to govern because we do not have an opportunity to govern here because the Republicans are in the majority, and they continue this kind of atmosphere.

The Army right now, they need additional billions to be able to keep up with what is happening in the war in Iraq and other commitments not only throughout the world but domestically. So, if something were to happen, whether it be China or Iran, there would be serious issues for us.

So, when you see these two leaders of not only Iraq and Iran come together at the U.S. taxpayers' expense, I mean this is something we need to pay very close attention to.

I am going to keep it very simple and I am going to yield because there is not a lot that I want to say tonight because I am truly upset about the fact that this continues to happen. The only disruption in this streamline of policy-making or lack thereof is that we have the majority in this House. There has to be a Democratic majority in this House to bring balance to our democracy.

Stay the course just because they say it does not mean it is the truth. We are winning in Iraq. Okay. They have said it so it means we are winning in Iraq, okay, even though you have national experts as it relates to the clandestine organizations not only in this country but abroad that are saying we are stimulating more terrorism than we are tearing down terrorism.

We have the 9/11 Commission that has put forth recommendations to make America safer, but this Republican majority will not adopt those recommendations.

We have individuals that are on their fifth and sixth deployment, need it be a soldier or a Marine or a Coast Guard or a sailor or a pilot in the U.S. Air Force, on their fourth and fifth deployment, and then we have the administration say stay the course, and we have the rubber stamp Congress say, yeah, yeah, stay the course.

Then we come up with recommendations on redeployment and hopefully working with other countries in securing not only Iraq but telling Iraq, listen, you have to secure your own country. You have on average 60 Iraqis dying a day, three to four U.S. Armed Forces dying a day. And so we are saying stay the course? It is very simple. What more do we need?

We are borrowing more from foreign Nations than we ever borrowed before, \$1.05 trillion versus \$1.01 trillion, 42 Presidents, 224 years of history before us.

We have got the past Speaker, Republican Speaker, it is not a Democrat,

that is saying, "They are seen by the country as being in charge of a government that cannot function."

Mr. Speaker, Speaker Gingrich is the individual who brought about, quote, unquote, the Republican revolution that is calling the Republican majority "they," and it goes on and on and on, need it be the gas companies that are making record profits. Look, rubber stamp Congress, \$113 billion.

Or need it be in congressional increases in salaries like Mr. RYAN pointed out. Individuals are being rewarded for mediocrity, for saying, okay, well, as long as I am with the team and I am loyal to the President of the United States and I am loyal to the Republican majority, I am going to move up in the company. Well, guess what, this is not a company. This is the government of the United States of America.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of the people.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Of the people. The U.S. taxpayer. We have individuals that are being placed in new positions. What do you think in the Pentagon? Well, if you go with your training, with your education and your experience and talk about a post-Iraq plan or talk about standing up to the boss or talk about maybe saying, well, excuse me, I know that you have your plan and all, but you know, we need X, that you are making a career decision in this government?

So just for balance we need a Democratic House. We need a Democratic Congress that will bring balance and will ask the "but" question or maybe we need to call this individual in and understand more about things because we are the individuals that are elected to represent the people of the United States of America, not Republican, not Democrats, not Independents, but the people of the United States of America. Until we have that, we are not going to have a true democracy. We are not going to have balance. We are not going to have level thinking. We are not going to have the direction that our men and women need on the ground. We are not going to have the accountability that the Constitution calls for, that Mr. RYAN always talks about in article I, section 1. We are not going to have that until we do away with this Republican rubber stamp Congress.

I do not care if individuals who want to follow me, Mr. Speaker, in a 30-second ad to talk about somebody voted one way or another. The facts are that America is more in danger than it was prior to the invasion of Iraq and fiscally in a worse situation in borrowing from nations that we have never borrowed from at the level that we are borrowing from at this present time.

We can talk about articles. We can talk about all these things. The facts are that the experts are saying one thing. It is like going to the doctor and the doctor said, you know, you have a really bad virus. Are you going to stand there and question the doctor? Are you going to say, well, you know,

well, I do not have a virus, Republican majority tells me it is just an allergy, I am going to be okay? No. You are not.

So we have the 9/11 Commission that is saying one thing, that are professionals that spent months and months and months, staff, millions of dollars, had the President and other folks going to testify before them. We have this National Security Council that have pulled themselves together, that have released this report, and we have Members on the Republican side, oh, they do not know what they are doing; it is just a draft report. It is going to be a draft until after the election.

So I think the American people, Mr. Speaker, are going to be paying attention to the obvious. This is not just party rhetoric. We are far beyond that at this point.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Can I ask you a question, again, in your role as a member of the Committee on Armed Services, there have been general after general that have spoken out publicly in a very courageous way that have made statements. Let me just read one of them.

Retired Army General John Batiste, this is what he had to say several months ago, and he was part of the team that actually did the planning. He was involved in the lead-up to the Iraq War. Here is what he had to say: "We went to war with a flawed plan that did not account for the hard work to build the peace after we took down the regime. We also served under a Secretary of Defense who did not understand leadership, who was abusive, who was arrogant, who did not build a strong team."

In your time on the committee, and I know Mr. RYAN, too, also serves on the Committee on Armed Services, has he ever been invited by the majority to come before the committee and explain in detail what the process was? Have you ever met General Batiste in your capacity on the dais of the House Armed Services Committee?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I am just going to put it to you this way. Anyone that speaks the truth, some may say truth to power, those individuals that are trained, that are educated, that have been in the Armed Services as the two-star general has been, and has anything to say about the Pentagon or the direction that we are going in will not and have not, since making that statement, anything to say before the Committee on Armed Services.

Do we want to call them in to kind of learn from them individuals, not the Republican majority? The Republican majority are loyal to the rubber stamp, not to the truth.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If the gentleman would yield to me, I think the American people should be aware that whether it was today or yesterday, there was a hearing, we will call it a rump hearing, an unofficial hearing that was conducted by Democrats with three retired senior military officers

who came before Democratic members to explain and give their opinions on what went wrong. Imagine, imagine having to do that, that your point about the need to change Congress so that there are no questions, but that this presidency and this White House and this administration is held accountable. It just boggles my mind.

Can I ask Mr. RYAN a question. General Paul Eaton had this to say, another retired Army major general, and he is referring to the Secretary of Defense. He has shown himself incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically and is far more than anyone responsible for what has happened to our important mission in Iraq. Mr. Rumsfeld must step down.

Have you ever seen General Eaton before your committee?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I do not recall ever seeing General Eaton.

Because I do not know where to start with what happened on Monday, September 25, 2006, which just so happens to be today with the hearings on the other side from the Democratic Policy Committee with these separate generals who are there, but I want to share with the American people and I want to share with the Speaker and other Members of this House some of the quotes that came out of there. I think this is important because we already have a national intelligence estimate saying that this country is less safe because of the war in Iraq, and then I am going to my friend from Florida who I know has some points to make, too. Less safe, okay, so now we go into what the testimony of some generals who are on the ground had to say.

This is General Batiste, who Mr. DELAHUNT referenced earlier. This guy used to be the senior military assistant to former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz who is now with the World Bank. He got a promotion for his great work in Iraq. He "charged that Rumsfeld and others in the Bush administration 'did not tell the American people the truth for fear of losing support for the war in Iraq.'"

"He told the committee, 'If we had seriously laid out and considered the full range of requirements for the war in Iraq, we would likely have taken a different course of action that would have maintained a clear focus on our main effort in Afghanistan, not fueled Islamic fundamentalism across the globe, and not created more enemies than there were insurgents.'"

He "charged in his testimony that Rumsfeld 'is not a competent wartime leader' and surrounded himself with 'compliant' subordinates."

"Secretary Rumsfeld ignored 12 years of U.S. Central Command deliberate planning and strategy, dismissed honest dissent, and browbeat subordinates to build 'his plan' which did not address the hard work to crush the insurgency, secure a post-Saddam Iraq, build the peace and set Iraq for up for self-reliance," Batiste said."

"In addition, Rumsfeld 'refused to acknowledge and even ignored the potential for the insurgency.'"

□ 2345

The retired general said, "At one point," and this is the apex of incompetency, "At one point he threatened to fire the next person who talked about the need for a post-war plan."

Now, we have all been involved in some form of leadership, whether it was in athletics or in politics or in business or whatever the case may be. To just not plan for an insurgency in a war is unacceptable. But then to say that whoever wants to talk about a plan is going to be fired is the height of incompetence.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Could you give the web site, Mr. RYAN.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio.
www.housedemocrats.gov/30something.
www.housedemocrats.gov/30something.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for the remainder of the time until midnight.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. So now what we have in summary is the Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte, who has signed off on this National Intelligence Estimate and said that he agrees with the conglomerate of intelligence agencies who have determined that we are worse off than we were before we entered Iraq and that Iraq has made us worse; and we have our 9/11 Commission chairs, the bipartisan 9/11 Commission chairs who on September 11 reissued their opinion, that they had issued a report card on their recommendations last December which included 10 C's, 12 D's and 4 F's. "What we argued then," they said, "is still true now. Americans are safer, but we are not yet safe."

Well, that was the September 11 assessment. Now the National Intelligence Estimate indicates that, no, we are not safer. We were not safe and we are not safer.

Here are some of the items that the 9/11 Commission indicated that we should implement that have not been implemented in the 5 years since 9/11. Allocate funding on the basis of risks and vulnerabilities. We haven't done that. We have not created and rehearsed State and local emergency response plans. We have not turned over the broadcast frequencies to first responders now, like we should, instead of in 2009 when the plans are to do that. We have not shut down the turf battles, nor increased information sharing among government agencies.

The list goes on and on. There were dozens of recommendations that they made, the majority of which have not been implemented. Both the bipartisan

co-chairs have come together repeatedly to say, why has this Congress not moved forward with the recommendations?

If we take control of this body, as we hope to on November 7, Mr. Speaker, we will implement the 9/11 recommendations, we will implement our Real Security Plan, we will commit to moving this country in a new direction, instead of continuing on the stay-the-course mentality.

We have got to make sure that we go in the direction that the American people have called for, which is to make sure that we aren't interminably mired in the chaos in Iraq; that every single day we don't see more and more of our young men and women killed by suicide bombers and by accidents and by deliberate bombings. All for what? That is what I think the vast majority of Americans are asking themselves every single day, is why are we there? What are we fighting for? Is it worth it?

That is why poll after poll comes back where Americans say they don't think the Iraq war was worth it. They certainly wanted us to go into Afghanistan. They certainly wanted us to go in and finish the job there, to hunt Osama bin Laden down and find him. But we don't even have enough troops on the ground in Afghanistan right now to get that done. That just isn't even possible at this point.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I don't know if the gentlelady saw last evening the interview with former President Bill Clinton. He achieved a bit of notoriety. There was a statement that President Clinton made about if he were President at this point in time, there would be so many more troops in Afghanistan. There would be so many more troops in Afghanistan. The inference is, of course, that we wouldn't be in Iraq.

Well, I am not going to speculate, but I thought it was significant that he talked about the reality is that there is just insufficient troops existing.

You know what I find particularly interesting, we are talking about active duty army military personnel. It is worse with the National Guard and the Army Reserve. I know we all have Guard units back home. I have a large military reservation that has served this country very well. We have, in my opinion, some of the best Army and Air Force National Guard units anywhere in the country. But the truth is, they are under incredible stress.

I will just read this to you. "More than two-thirds of the Army National Guard's 34 brigades are not combat ready largely because of vast equipment shortfalls that will take as much as \$21 billion to correct."

"The comments by Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum came in the wake of disclosures by Army officials, analysts and members of the Congress that two-thirds of the active Army's brigades are not combat ready."

"The problem, they say, is driven by budget constraints that won't allow

the military to complete the personnel training and equipment repairs and replacement that must be done when units return home after deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan.

"I am further behind or in an even more dire situation than the active Army, but we both have the same symptoms. I just have a higher fever."

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. DELAHUNT, I am going to yield after I mention something, about 2 minutes, to Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, because the facts are what they are. It is what it is.

We are highlighting these. Because we are using third-party validators, Mr. DELAHUNT, we are highlighting these with third-party validators, just in case the Republican majority, and like I told you, for the 109th Congress, I am done with trying to get the Republican majority to see it the way not only that the experts see it, that are bipartisan, or nonpartisan, when it comes down to national security, and the American people.

We can talk about energy, we can talk about safety of America, we can talk about our operations overseas, all of these things are by third-party validators.

Mr. DELAHUNT, the real issue is when you have a situation like we have in Iraq, you call in those individuals that are speaking out. Who? These major generals and these brigadier generals and individuals that are retired now, and retired because they couldn't say it when they were enlisted. What, they are not longer useful to country? We don't want to know what they have to share with us, to help us learn, to help us protect America?

When I was in the State legislature for 8 years, when someone would come to my office, and even here now in Washington, I want to talk to the man or the woman that is in the drop program, those individuals that are already getting ready to retire, because they are going to tell you the truth. They are not concerned about what is going to happen.

I want a sergeant major in the military to come talk to me, because a sergeant major, a command sergeant major is the highest enlisted individual in the armed services. You can't touch them, because they are respected by the men and women that serve under them and with them. They will tell you the truth.

Those are the kind of individuals that we need before the full Armed Services Committee. Those are the kind of individuals that we need to highlight under the dome here, be it House or Senate. That is what we need.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is not what is happening in this Congress. So just because the Republican majority says it or the President says it doesn't necessarily mean that it is true.

We are saying that we are going to bring balance, we are going to bring oversight. Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, as I yield to you, if there was a Democratic President in the White House,